

## Coalition for Adequate Funding for Special Education

### TALKING POINTS

- **Support Special Education Equalization Funding (AB 312, O'Donnell)**
  - **Support Preschool Funding for Children With Disabilities (AB 312, O'Donnell)**
  - **Oppose Dismantling Existing Special Education Regional Governance Structure**
- The proposed State Budget does not include increased funding beyond an incremental cost of living adjustment for special education programs provided to the over 700,000 children with disabilities in California.
  - Our district represents \_\_\_\_ families whose children are served by local special education programs. Their ability to learn and succeed affects all students and society as a whole. These children and youth range from those with learning and/or physical disabilities to those with high-intensity conditions like autism, hearing impairment, and emotional disturbances. The number of children with these high-intensity conditions is increasing rapidly—autism has increased dramatically in the past 15 years—and the cost to provide appropriate education is high.
  - State and federal special education funding has not kept pace with costs and has been left out of recent initiatives to increase funding to targeted student populations. We urge the Governor and Legislature to increase special education funding and to provide equalization to eliminate the current disparities that exist between school agencies as proposed in AB 312 (O'Donnell).
  - Additionally, there is zero state funding allocated for preschool programs serving three- and four-year-old children with disabilities. Studies show that children who receive high-quality care and education before kindergarten are 40% to 60% less likely to need special education interventions when they reach school age and funding early intervention programs, such as preschool, provides educational and social benefits to children that results in significant future cost savings and better educational outcomes. We urge the Governor and Legislature to establish an ongoing preschool funding adjustment to pay for services to these children, as proposed in AB 312 (O'Donnell).
  - These positions are consistent with the March 2015, California Statewide Special Education Task Force recommendations that highlighted the inequities in special education funding rates, and the lack of state preschool funding for the state's youngest learners with disabilities.
  - We oppose any effort to dismantle the current special education Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) governance structure and proposals that would provide special education funding directly to school districts instead of to the existing SELPAs that were formed to ensure all children with disabilities within a region have access to appropriate programs and services. We believe changes to this structure would result in many unintended consequences and would be disruptive to children with disabilities.
  - We support a conversation at the statewide level to improve funding and services for students with disabilities.
  - The decisions you and other legislators make can forever impact the lives of children with disabilities and their families. We strongly urge you to increase funding for special education programs and services.

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### *SAMPLE LETTER*

Date

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
 Member, California State \_\_\_\_\_  
 State Capitol, Room \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

As a (parent/teacher/community member/organization), I am writing to urge you to increase funding for special education programs. These programs focus on the state's neediest students and are the most costly to administer.

Special education did not fare well in the Governor's 2017-18 State Budget proposal and would only receive an inflation adjustment that will fall far short of increased costs to operate special education programs and provide services to our most needy student population. We ask you and your colleagues in the Legislature to support increased funding for special education and specifically ask for your support of legislation to equalize funding among Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPA's), and provide funding for preschool programs serving children with disabilities. We are in strong support of Assembly Bill 312 (O'Donnell).

We also ask that you oppose any effort to dismantle the current special education locally-controlled regional governance structure (SELPA's), and oppose proposals that would send special education funding directly to school districts instead of SELPA's. We believe the current structure ensures all children with disabilities have access to appropriate special education programs and services and that a change of this magnitude would result in many unintended consequences and would be disruptive and harmful to children with disabilities.

Thank you for your attention and support for our children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Name  
 Title  
 Address  
 Phone Number  
 email